

VZCZCXR05291  
PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR  
DE RUEHKU #0910/01 2340601  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 210601Z AUG 08  
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2015  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 000910

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/I  
PASS H FOR CODEL BARDALLO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV MARR MASS OREP KU

SUBJECT: GOK OFFICIALS TELL CODEL BARDALLO "THE SURGE HAS WORKED IN IRAQ," DIPLOMACY NEEDED ON IRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Deborah K. Jones for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

¶1. (C) In an August 13 meeting, Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister told CODEL Bordallo that Kuwait is committed to a close, long-term defense relationship with the U.S. and prepared to host U.S. troops indefinitely. Nevertheless, there is frustration over long delays in purchasing U.S. military equipment. In a separate meeting, Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs told the CODEL that Kuwait strongly favors diplomatic pressure rather than military action to constrain Iran's nuclear program. On Iraq, the FM stated emphatically that "the surge has worked" in providing Iraqis with a new sense of optimism about their country's future. He stated that Kuwait and other responsible oil producers favor a stable oil market, but importing countries have to do more to curb speculation and eliminate refining bottlenecks. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On August 13 a CODEL headed by Delegate Madeleine Bordallo (D-Guam) and including Representatives Ruben Hinojosa (D-Texas), Michael Turner (R-Ohio), and David Loebsack (D-Iowa) met separately with Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Jaber al-Mubarak al-Hamad Al Sabah and with Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah al-Salem Al Sabah. End Summary.

MOD: Kuwait Has "Duty" to Support the U.S.

¶3. (C) In their call on the Defense Minister/Acting PM, Delegate Bordallo noted that three members of the CODEL (Bordallo, Turner, and Loebsack) are members of the House Armed Services Committee and had a particular interest in observing the U.S. military mission in Kuwait and in developing an understanding of the U.S.- Kuwait defense relationship, particularly regarding the war on terrorism. Bordallo expressed deep appreciation for Kuwait's many contributions in this area and she and other members of the CODEL queried the Defense Minister on his views concerning the future of the U.S.-Kuwait military relationship, particularly in the event of a U.S. drawdown in Iraq.

Stabilization in Iraq

¶4. (C) In response to comments and queries from the CODEL, the Minister noted the GOK's "duty" to provide continuing support to the U.S. -- Kuwait's "close friend and ally" -- both out of the necessity to fight terrorism "shoulder to shoulder" and in recognition of U.S. efforts to help the

Iraqi people. The Minister acknowledged that Iraq remains a paramount concern for the GOK, given its immediate proximity to Kuwait, and that Kuwait is deeply worried about Iran's role in fomenting instability in Iraq. Notwithstanding these concerns, the GOK feels that Iraq is on the road to stabilization, thanks to U.S. efforts. Responding to CODEL queries about the impact on the U.S.-Kuwait relationship of an eventual U.S. drawdown in Iraq, the Minister said a drawdown would have no impact on the U.S.-Kuwait relationship. Kuwait and its military will continue to rely on U.S. technology and friendship now and in the future. As part of this relationship, Kuwait will continue to host U.S. troops on its soil indefinitely, in accordance with existing agreements.

MOD: Long Delays in Purchases of U.S. Military Equipment

---

¶5. (U) Raising a sole area of concern, the Defense Minister commented on the GOK's frustration over the excessive documentation and long bureaucratic delays it had experienced, perceived to be due in part to U.S. Congressional requirements, in purchasing U.S. military equipment through FMS. Senior Kuwaiti military officials present at the meeting noted that they have experienced long delays in their efforts to purchase Apache helicopters, additional Patriot missiles, AIM9-X air-to-air missiles, AMRAAM radar guided air-to-air missiles, and C-130J. The Defense Minister noted that because Kuwait's military is small, it relies on advanced U.S. technology to fill the gap and ensure interoperability with U.S. forces. To this end,

KUWAIT 00000910 002 OF 003

the GOK recently approved a significant increase in its defense budget for the next decade.

MFA: Continued Diplomacy is Preferred Strategy on Iran

---

¶6. (C) In the CODEL's subsequent meeting with Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah al-Salem Al Sabah, the Foreign Minister (FM) focused on GOK concerns over Iran's nuclear program. Echoing a theme that he recently addressed publicly (SEPTTEL), the FM told the CODEL that the GOK has been clear with Iran that it must abide by international safeguards on its nuclear program and that no "smoke and mirrors" will be acceptable. The GOK is deeply worried about Iran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons, but it is also concerned about Iran's peaceful nuclear program. Iran's Bushehr nuclear reactor, he noted, is much closer to Kuwait than it is to Tehran, and the GOK is worried that an accident there could endanger Kuwait. Responding to CODEL queries on the optimal means of dissuading Iran from pursuing a renegade nuclear program, the FM said the GOK is convinced that the only reasonable course is to maintain international solidarity and diplomatic pressure on Iran. The FM noted there are divisions within the Iranian government over the wisdom of pursuing the nuclear track and that the population at large is disenchanted with the Iranian government and its mismanagement of the economy. The wisest course to follow, he suggested, would be to exploit these divisions through sanctions and ever-mounting international pressure that must include Russia and China. Military action, on the other hand, would have the effect of diverting criticism from Iranian President Ahmadinejad and could lead to the militarization of the entire region.

MFA: Kuwait Favors Oil Price Stabilization

---

¶7. (C) In response to a comment from Representative Hinojosa urging Kuwait to do what it can to help bring about stabilization in oil prices lest it face consumer

retaliation, the FM said that Kuwait, like most oil producing countries, is already operating at maximum production. The real problem, he suggested, is a shortage of refining capacity in the U.S. and other importing countries; Kuwait expressed interest in building a refinery in the U.S. to alleviate this problem, but found the door closed. The FM said that Kuwait and other responsible producer countries desire a stable oil market, but that prices continue to rise in response to supply and demand, speculation (over which Kuwait has no control), and the impact of political tensions in the region. It is not in Kuwait's long-term interest, the FM noted, for prices to rise so high that importing countries are forced to seek alternative sources of energy. In addition, Kuwait's extensive overseas investments will suffer if high oil prices damage the world economy. For these reasons, Kuwait is doing what it can to contribute to oil price stability.

MFA: "The Surge Has Worked" In Iraq

---

¶ 8. (C) Responding to a question from Congressman Loebsack on the future of Iraq, the FM said the optimal outcome in Iraq, from the GOK's point of view, is a democratic, de-centralized Iraq that respects human rights and does not threaten Kuwait. Kuwait had taken a big "gamble" in supporting the U.S./UK campaign against Saddam Hussein and had not agreed with all of the subsequent steps the USG had supported in trying to bring about democracy in a state that had no prior experience of that form of government, but the minister acknowledged that, following a "long, difficult learning process," conditions are improving in Iraq. "The surge has worked" he noted, in instilling greater confidence among Iraqis in the future of their country. Iraq is now more open to a "politics of inclusion" and is moving in the right direction.

¶ 9. (C) The FM also commented on Kuwait's commitment to work with the USG to combat terrorism and, in particular, to prevent the re-emergence of Al-Qaeda in the Gulf region, Afghanistan "or anywhere else."

\*\*\*\*\*  
For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:

KUWAIT 00000910 003 OF 003

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable> s

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>  
\*\*\*\*\*

JONES